

EU report: the Republic of Moldova moved forward with key reforms

Following the change of government in June 2019, the [Republic of Moldova](#) has moved resolutely with the implementation of key reforms to address the deterioration of democratic standards and the rule of law, in order to allow citizens to fully benefit from the EU-Moldova Association Agreement.

This stems from the [Association Implementation Report](#) the EU published today – in the context of the [revised European Neighbourhood Policy](#) – on the implementation of the commitments under the EU-Moldova Association Agreement over the past year. The report will feed into the annual EU-Moldova Association Council, taking place in Brussels on 30 September 2019.

“The new Moldovan government has started an important reform plan to reinforce democracy and the rule of law in the country. We expect the authorities to deliver on the commitments made and to implement the ambitious EU-Moldova Agreement, to the benefit of our citizens. As EU, we are ready to continue to accompany and support this work, because we value our friendship a lot”, said High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini**.

Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes **Hahn**, added: *“In July 2019 we already resumed budget support payments; we also signed with the Government financing agreements on sustainable local development and rule of law that will allow for the implementation of programmes bringing tangible results to the people of Moldova. We are ready to further step up our financial support and advice in response to the Government’s robust reform agenda. All these are clear signs of our appreciation of the steps already taken and an encouragement to the authorities to continue on their ambitious reform path.”*

Today’s report – prepared by the European External Action Service and the European Commission services – shows that while reforms in the economic and banking sector advanced during 2018, the fundamental structural reforms of the judicial system, the fight against corruption, the prosecution of the 2014 banking fraud and ensuring media plurality were lagging behind.

Following the non-transparent invalidation of the mayoral elections in Chisinau in June 2018, the EU and other international actors noted a backsliding in the rule of law and democracy situation, which are key values and principles at the core of the ambitious EU- Moldova Association Agreement. In light of these developments, the EU decided in 2018 to put on hold payments on budget support and macro financial assistance as well as recalibrated and reduced further financial support.

The new Government that came to power in June 2019 committed to a strengthened and consistent implementation of the Association Agreement with its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area in full respect of its core

principles. The Government adopted a number of programmes focussed on the most urgent reforms and took significant steps, in particular on the electoral framework, in the fight against corruption and in the de-politicisation of state institutions. In response, the Commission resumed budget support assistance and signed three crucial financing agreements, altogether worth close to €55 million.

For More Information

[2019 Association Implementation Report on Moldova](#)

[Factsheet – EU-Moldova relations](#)

[European Council Conclusions on the Republic of Moldova, 20 June 2019](#)

[EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova](#)

Daily News 12 / 09 / 2019

Vaccination: la Commission et l'OMS unissent leurs forces pour promouvoir les vaccins

Aujourd'hui, la Commission européenne et l'Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS) organisent à Bruxelles le premier Sommet mondial sur la vaccination. L'objectif est d'accélérer l'action au niveau mondial afin d'enrayer la propagation des maladies que les vaccins permettent d'éviter ainsi que de mettre fin à la propagation de la désinformation, en matière de vaccins, dans le monde entier. Jean-Claude **Juncker**, président de la Commission européenne, a déclaré: « *La vaccination permet d'éviter et déjà d'éviter deux à trois millions de décès par an et pourrait en empêcher 1,5 million de plus si la couverture vaccinale mondiale s'améliorait. Le sommet d'aujourd'hui est une opportunité pour tenter de combler cette lacune. La Commission continuera à collaborer avec les États membres de l'UE dans le cadre de leurs efforts à l'échelle nationale et avec nos partenaires présents ici aujourd'hui.* » Le Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, directeur général de l'Organisation mondiale de la Santé, a déclaré: « *Après de nombreuses années de progrès, nous en sommes à une étape décisive. La rougeole est en train de réapparaître et un enfant sur dix n'est pas protégé par les vaccins essentiels à cet âge.* » En ouvrant le Sommet ce matin, le président **Juncker** et le Dr Tedros ont appelé à accélérer les efforts rapidement pour arrêter la propagation de maladies évitables grâce à la vaccination telles que la rougeole. Au cours des trois dernières années, sept pays, dont quatre en Europe, ont perdu leur statut de pays ayant éradiqué la rougeole. Le Président a déclaré à ce sujet : « *Il est inacceptable qu'au 21ème siècle nos enfants succombent encore des suites de maladies qui ne devraient plus exister depuis longtemps en Europe. Mettre fin à cette situation intolérable est une ardente obligation qui s'impose à chacun de nous.* » Le [communiqué de presse](#) complet et les [questions et](#)

[réponses](#) sont disponibles en ligne. Le discours complet du président **Juncker** est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Anca Paduraru – Tél.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tél.: +32 229 87624)

Erasmus+: l'UE augmente la participation d'étudiants et de personnel africains en 2019

L'UE a investi 17,6 millions d'euros supplémentaires pour aider plus de 8 500 étudiants et membres du personnel africains nouvellement sélectionnés à participer à Erasmus+ en 2019. Cette augmentation du financement Erasmus+ est un pas de plus vers l'engagement pris par le président de la Commission Jean-Claude **Juncker** dans son [discours sur l'état de l'Union](#) de septembre 2018 à soutenir 35 000 étudiants et chercheurs africains d'ici à 2020. Les 17,6 millions d'euros supplémentaires provenant des instruments financiers extérieurs de la Commission et du [Fonds fiduciaire de l'UE pour l'Afrique](#) ont permis d'accroître de 40% la participation des ressortissants africains. Pour les pays d'Afrique occidentale et de la Corne de l'Afrique, le nombre de bourses a plus que doublé grâce aux fonds supplémentaires. En outre, pour concurrencer les meilleurs étudiants du monde, 313 jeunes étudiants de 33 pays africains ont reçu des bourses pour les programmes de master conjoints Erasmus Mundus. Cela représente 239 bourses d'études pour 27 pays africains sélectionnés l'an dernier. Plus d'informations sont disponibles dans ce [communiqué de presse](#) et cette [fiche d'information](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tél.: +32 229 67083; Marietta Grammenou – Tél.: +32 229 83583; Christina Wunder – Tél.: +32 229 92256)

Juncker Plan supports €30 million investment in biomedical research fund

The European Investment Fund (EIF) is providing €30 million to the KHAN Technology Transfer Fund I, a drug discovery fund based in Dortmund, Germany. The European Investment Fund financing is via the InnovFin programme and it is backed by the Juncker Plan's European Fund for Strategic Investments. KHAN-I will invest in innovative drug discovery projects and spin-off companies at various stages of clinical development. Commissioner Carlos **Moedas**, responsible for Research, Science and Innovation, said: "Today's agreement adds to the Juncker Plan's strong track record in supporting biomedical research and drug discovery projects. This kind of support for researchers and scientists to bring their ideas and innovations to market will help keep Europe at the forefront of innovation." A press release is available [here](#). As of July 2019, the Juncker Plan has mobilised €424 billion of additional investment, including €32.6 billion in Germany. The Plan is currently supporting 967,000 small and medium businesses across Europe. (For more information Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

Eurogroup and informal ECOFIN meetings, 13 and 14 September 2019

Vice-President **Dombrovskis** will represent the Commission at this week's Eurogroup and informal ECOFIN meetings taking place in Helsinki, Finland. During the Eurogroup meeting, euro area finance ministers will hold a

thematic discussion on the quality of public finances and exchange views on initiatives to boost the transparency of the Eurogroup. The Commission and the ECB will also brief the ministers on the [main findings](#) of the 11th post-programme surveillance mission to Ireland. Following the mandate received by EU leaders at the Euro Summit in June, the Eurogroup in inclusive format will focus on pending issues of the Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness (BICC) for the euro area. Vice-President **Dombrovskis** will also represent the Commission at the informal ECOFIN meeting on Friday and Saturday. The meeting will kick off in the presence of finance ministers and central bank governors on Friday afternoon with a discussion on the resilience of financial market infrastructure to cyber attacks and hybrid threats. This will be followed by an agenda point on rebooting the [EU's Capital Markets Union Agenda](#) during the next institutional cycle, and identifying ways to foster the cross-border integration of European capital markets. On Saturday, ministers will take stock of the functioning of the current EU fiscal rules, including the presentation of a report by the chair of the [European Fiscal Board](#). They will also discuss the tools at their disposal to take enhanced action on climate change. In a separate but related debate, ministers will exchange views and experiences on the role of energy taxation in climate change mitigation and in reducing emissions. This follows the evaluation of the current EU energy taxation directive, published by Commission services this week. (For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: [+32 229-56153](tel:+3222956153); Vanessa Mock – Tel.: [+32 229 56194](tel:+3222956194); Annikky Lamp – Tel.: [+32 229 56151](tel:+3222956151); Enda McNamara – Tel.: [+32 229 58615](tel:+3222958615); Patrick McCullough – Tel.: [+32 229 87183](tel:+3222987183))

EU report: the Republic of Moldova moved resolutely forward with key reforms

Following the change of government in June 2019, the [Republic of Moldova](#) has moved resolutely forward with the implementation of key reforms to address the deterioration of democratic standards and the rule of law, in order to allow citizens to fully benefit from the EU-Moldova Association Agreement. This stems from the [Association Implementation Report](#) the EU published today on the implementation of the commitments under the EU-Moldova Association Agreement over the past year. *“The new Moldovan government has started an important reform plan to reinforce democracy and the rule of law in the country. We expect the authorities to deliver on the commitments made and to implement the ambitious EU-Moldova Agreement, to the benefit of our citizens. As EU, we are ready to continue to accompany and support this work, because we value our friendship a lot”*, said High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini**. Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes **Hahn**, added: *“In July 2019 we already resumed budget support payments; we also signed with the Government financing agreements on sustainable local development and rule of law that will allow for the implementation of programmes bringing tangible results to the people of Moldova. We are ready to further step up our financial support and advice in response to the Government’s robust reform agenda. All these are clear signs of our appreciation of the steps already taken and an encouragement to the authorities to continue on their ambitious reform path.”* Read the full

press release [here](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

European Union supports Venezuelan refugees and host communities in countries most affected by the crisis

The European Commission has mobilised an additional €10 million to support Venezuelan refugees and migrants by strengthening the capacities of national institutions, civil society organisations and host communities in the countries most affected by the crisis in Venezuela – namely Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Channelled through the EU's [Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace](#), this assistance will link immediate and concrete relief actions with rehabilitation and future development measures. Its approach will be three-fold: It will strengthen registration and identification capacities for migrants and refugees, fund measures to reduce tensions and the risk of violence with host communities, and address the vulnerability of women, girls and boys exposed to human trafficking, sexual and labour exploitation. In her meeting with the President of Colombia Ivan Duque today in Bogotá, High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** will discuss, amongst other topics, the challenges related to hosting refugees and migrants from Venezuela. Colombia hosts the largest number of displaced Venezuelans – nearly 1.5 million according to the latest estimates. In total, over four million Venezuelans have left the country in the past two years, following the deterioration of the socio-economic, political and security situation in Venezuela. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)

Energy taxation rules are out of step with EU energy and climate ambition, new report finds

EU rules on energy taxation no longer deliver the same positive contribution as when they first came into force in 2003, according to a [new report](#) published by Commission services today. While the evaluation of the Energy Taxation Directive (ETD) does not make any policy recommendations, it explores how more environmentally friendly policies could better support the EU's wider climate change commitments. The EDT lays down rules for the taxation of energy products used as motor or heating fuels and for electricity. Today's report shows that while it initially made a positive contribution to the internal market, current rules do not contribute to the new EU regulatory framework and policy objectives in the area of climate and energy, where technology, national tax rates and energy markets have all evolved considerably over the past 15 years. For example, no link exists between the minimum tax rates of fuels and their energy content and CO2 emissions. The evaluation also points out that the high divergence in national energy tax rates is not in line with other policy instruments and can lead to fragmentation of the internal market, a problem exacerbated by the widespread use of optional tax exemptions. At a time when the EU has considerably raised its ambition by setting new climate targets for 2030 – including reducing greenhouse gas emissions domestically by at least 40 % compared to 1990 levels – the EU's energy taxation framework has not kept

pace. For instance, the ETD does not reflect the current mix of energy products on the market in the EU. The evaluation concludes that overlaps, gaps and inconsistencies significantly hamper EU objectives in the field of energy, environment, climate change and transport. The full report is available [here](#). Today's publication is part of the Commission's Regulatory Fitness and Performance (REFIT) programme and follows our blueprint for [a transition to QMV decision-making](#) in the area of climate and energy taxation published earlier this year. It comes as EU Finance Ministers prepare to debate the EU's energy taxation architecture [at their meeting in Helsinki this weekend](#). (For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Patrick McCullough – Tel.: +32 229 87183)

Chaîne d'approvisionnement alimentaire : la Commission se félicite du soutien des États membres pour une plus grande transparence des prix

Suite à un échange avec les États membres, la Commission va adopter les mesures qui visent à renforcer la transparence par une meilleure communication sur les prix tout au long de la chaîne d'approvisionnement alimentaire. Après avoir interdit les [pratiques commerciales déloyales](#) et amélioré les conditions de coopération des producteurs, la Commission a présenté [en mai le troisième élément](#) pour améliorer l'équité dans la chaîne d'approvisionnement alimentaire, à savoir une collecte plus approfondie des prix des produits agroalimentaires à différents stades de la chaîne d'approvisionnement pour voir comment ces derniers sont déterminés et évoluent. Une plus grande transparence permettra aux différents acteurs, dont les producteurs, de faire des choix plus éclairés et d'améliorer la compréhension de la formation des prix et l'évolution des tendances tout au long de la chaîne alimentaire. Elle peut également favoriser de meilleures décisions d'affaires, y compris une meilleure gestion des risques, et améliorer la confiance. Phil **Hogan**, commissaire à l'agriculture a déclaré : « *Accroître la transparence du marché, c'est fournir plus d'informations, sur plus de produits, plus souvent. Ce faisant, nous donnerons un meilleur équilibre à la chaîne et assurerons une prise de décision plus efficace. Accroître la transparence, c'est aussi une question d'équité : nous permettons un accès égal à l'information sur les prix, ce qui clarifiera davantage le fonctionnement de la chaîne d'approvisionnement alimentaire. Complétées par la directive récemment adoptée interdisant les pratiques commerciales déloyales, ainsi que par les améliorations apportées en 2017 à la législation sur les organisations de producteurs, ces règles renforceront le rôle des agriculteurs dans la chaîne d'approvisionnement alimentaire, un objectif clé pour la Commission.* » À la suite de la décision des États membres au sein du comité de l'organisation commune des marchés, les mesures seront adoptées par la Commission dans les prochaines semaines et seront applicables à partir du 1er janvier 2021. Un communiqué de presse est [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Daniel Rosario – Tél.: +32 229 56185; Clémence Robin – Tél.: +32 229 52509)

New report on digital education shows upward trends in Europe's schools

The European Commission's [Eurydice network](#) published today a [report](#) that maps the state of digital education in schools across Europe. The report looks at how digital competences are taught and assessed. It also gives an overview of the digital skills of teachers, the policies designed to support digital education and the use of technology in large-scale national tests. Half of the education systems reviewed are currently reforming curricula as regards digital competences, either by including the topic for the first time, giving the subject more prominence or updating curricula to include, for instance, new or different elements of coding, computational thinking or online safety. Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: *"I welcome today's report which shows that schools across Europe are making progress in using new technologies in teaching and learning. I am particularly pleased to see the growing number of initiatives to support teachers in using technology in the classroom, an area we will address at the Second European Education Summit on 26 September. We know that teachers play a crucial role in improving the digital competences of young people and in ensuring that technology is used in purposeful ways to make learning more relevant, engaging and fit for the digital age."* Two-thirds of education systems reviewed recognise the importance of teachers' digital skills, and most countries provide training for teachers, although guidance is lacking on how to assess pupils' digital skills in the classroom. While most countries have put in place strategies for digital education, few monitor and evaluate these strategies in a systematic and regular way. Supporting Member States in harnessing technology in education and developing digital skills of teachers and learners are central to the Commission's [Digital Education Action Plan](#), which includes 11 actions to encourage and support innovation in education. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Marietta Grammenou – Tel.: +32 229 83583)

State aid: Commission approves amended commitments for Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena

The European Commission has approved under EU State aid rules certain amendments to a set of commitments submitted by Italy, on the basis of which the Commission in [July 2017](#) had approved Italian support for a precautionary recapitalisation of Monte dei Paschi di Siena (MPS) under EU rules. As part of the original commitments submitted by Italy, and approved by the Commission, the bank committed to reinforce its capital position by issuing a certain amount of "Tier 2" instruments (subordinated debt) by a specified deadline. Italy has now requested an extension of this deadline. To counterbalance the extended deadline and minimise possible distortions of competition caused by the extension, Italy proposed a series of additional commitments aimed at further reducing costs and restoring the bank's viability. Under EU State aid rules, the Commission may approve amendments provided that the new commitments can be considered equivalent to those originally submitted. The Commission concluded that the Italian amendments preserve the balance of the original commitments and do not affect the overall timeframe for the implementation of the bank's restructuring plan. On this basis, the Commission concluded that aid Italy granted in July 2017 for

the restructuring of MPS remains compatible with EU rules and has approved the amended commitments. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#), under case number SA.55121. (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Heras by Equistone

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over the entire business of Heras consisting of companies in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the UK by Equistone of the UK. Heras is active in the supply of perimeter protection solutions and services, such as fencing systems, gates and barriers and their maintenance and repair. Equistone is a mid-market private equity investment firm operating across Europe. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given that the companies' activities do not overlap. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.9494](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of BNVC Group Holdings by EQT and Canada Pension Plan Investment Board

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of BNVC Group Holdings, Inc. of the US by EQT Fund Management S.à r.l (“EQT”) of Luxembourg and Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (“CPPIB”) of Canada. BNVC Group Holdings is a holding company of Waystar, a provider of revenue cycle management solutions for healthcare systems and providers in the US. EQT is an investment firm and CPPIB is active in investment management. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given that there are no horizontal overlaps or vertical links between the activities of the companies. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.9518](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Eurostat : La production industrielle en baisse de 0,4% dans la zone euro, baisse de 0,1% dans l'UE28 (juillet 2019 comparé à juin 2019)

En juillet 2019 par rapport à juin 2019, la production industrielle corrigée des variations saisonnières a diminué de 0,4% dans la zone euro (ZE19) et de 0,1% dans l'UE28, selon les estimations d'Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. En juin 2019, la production industrielle a diminué de 1,4% dans la zone euro et l'UE28. En juillet 2019 par rapport à juillet 2018, la production industrielle a diminué de 2,0% dans la zone euro et de 1,2%

dans l'UE28. Un communiqué de presse complet est disponible [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Lucía Caudet – Tél.: +32 229 56182; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tél.: +32 229 56169)

Eurostat : Annuaire régional d'Eurostat 2019 : Diversité régionale au sein de l'UE – comment se situe votre région?

Est-il plus facile de trouver un emploi dans votre région que dans d'autres régions de l'Union européenne? Quelles sont les principales activités économiques dans votre région? Votre région est-elle plus riche que d'autres? Vous trouverez les réponses à ces questions et à beaucoup d'autres dans l'édition 2019 de l'Annuaire régional, publié par Eurostat, l'Office statistique de l'Union européenne. L'Annuaire régional offre une vue d'ensemble du large éventail de statistiques régionales qui sont disponibles pour 281 régions de l'UE et, dans le cas de certains indicateurs, pour 1 348 régions. Les données sont disponibles pour l'ensemble des 28 États membres de l'UE et, le cas échéant, pour les régions statistiques des pays de l'AELE et des pays candidats. Un communiqué de presse complet est disponible [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Spahr – Tél.: +32 2 295 00 55; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tél.: +32 229 56169)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Third EU-Western Balkans Media Days on 12-13 September in Montenegro: ensuring media freedom and sustainability of independent media in the Western Balkans

The third edition of the EU-Western Balkans Media Days has started today in Podgorica, [Montenegro](#). Organised by the Commission, the Conference gathers around 350 representatives of media and civil society organisations as well as policymakers from the Western Balkans and the EU. Participants will discuss today and tomorrow the role of media in societal changes, its impact on key reforms on the path towards the EU, as well as identify forward-looking actions to strengthen independent media. Ahead of the Conference, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes **Hahn**, said: "The EU-Western Balkans Media Days – that we launched in 2017 – have contributed to a more comprehensive approach to support media freedom in the region. EU representatives and experts engage and hear directly from journalists, representatives of media organisations as well as political representatives about the effectiveness of the EU assistance and current challenges and concerns to tackle. Freedom of media is one of the fundamental principles of the European Union and a key political indicator in the EU accession process. We must and we will continue to work on concrete ways to sustain and increase independent and professional journalism, help use of new technologies and favour regional cooperation, reconciliation and exchanges. The EU-Western Balkans Media Days are an important step in this direction." This year's third edition focuses on discussing how to guarantee freedom and sustainability of media in the region and how to ensure support to new generations of journalists. The discussion about reconciliation and regional cooperation, and overcoming nationalistic narratives hold a central place on the conference agenda alongside themes such as the importance of independent reporting, how to avoid manipulation of information and how to

enhance public media literacy. More information on the [EU-Western Balkans Media Days](#) as well as the text of the [video message](#) by Commissioner **Hahn** and the [video trailer](#) of the event are available online. Read the opening remarks by Director-General Christian Danielsson [here](#). Follow the discussions under #EUWBmedia. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

European Institute of Innovation and Technology: ten years of supporting creativity and talent

Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, will this evening co-host an event with the [European Institute of Innovation and Technology](#) (EIT) at its premises in Brussels to display how the EIT promotes talented innovators, helping them turn their ideas into products that benefit society. Commissioner **Navracsics** will give a speech on the future role of the Institute and participate in a panel discussion with innovators who are part of the EIT community on how the EIT can help ensure that the EU remains competitive. He said: *“I am very pleased that, just over ten years since its creation, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology is now a core part of the EU innovation landscape. With its unique focus on education, it will continue its important role under the future Horizon Europe programme, increasing the innovation capacity of the EU, addressing societal challenges, and strengthening the position of Europe as a global innovation player.”* The event will bring together innovators and entrepreneurs, politicians, public servants and representatives of the EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities. The full programme is available [here](#). More information on the EIT can be found in this [factsheet](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Marietta Grammenou – Tel.: +32 229 83583)

[Upcoming events](#) of the European Commission (ex-Top News)

Erasmus+: EU boosts participation of African students and staff in 2019

The EU has invested an additional €17.6 million to support over 8,500 newly selected African students and staff to participate in Erasmus+ in 2019. This increase in Erasmus+ funding is one more step towards the commitment announced by President Jean-Claude **Juncker** in his [State of the Union speech](#) in September 2018 to have supported 35,000 African students and researchers by 2020.

Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: *“Empowering young people in Africa is key in building a better future. This means promoting education, and this year, we have focused in particular on boosting cooperation with businesses to ensure that young people in Africa acquire all the skills they need for their professional life. Projects*

supporting innovative learning methods, entrepreneurship and opening up chances to find jobs in key areas such as food, agribusiness and energy transformation are key features of this year's selection. This is the plus that Erasmus+ offers."

Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica**, said: *"Our Africa-Europe Alliance is first and foremost about people. We want to invest in quality education in Africa. We want to strengthen the connections between European and African students and higher education institutions. Giving them the chance to exchange know-how and inspire one another will boost inclusive socio-economic growth, and reduce poverty and inequality. On top of this, it will equip African students with the skills they need to find decent jobs"*.

The results of the 2019 Erasmus+ call bring the total number of exchanges between Africa and Europe to 26,247 since the beginning of the programme in 2014 and well on track to meeting the 2020 target of supporting 35,000 people as announced in the [Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs](#). This year, 8,555 African and 4,649 European university students and staff will benefit from exchanges in 53 African countries and the 34 European countries that participate in the Erasmus+ programme. Students will be able to stay abroad for up to one year, while staff exchanges last up to two months.

The additional funding of €17.6 million – coming from the Commission's external financial instruments and the EU Trust Fund for Africa –has boosted participation by African nationals by 40% overall. For countries in Western Africa and the Horn of Africa, the number of scholarships has more than doubled thanks to the additional money. It has also made it possible to include more countries in the programme, such as Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Congo and Burundi, and to increase the number of exchanges, in particular for Benin, Cape Verde, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Somalia.

In addition, competing against the best students worldwide, 313 young students from 33 African countries were awarded scholarships for the [Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree programmes](#). This is up from 239 scholarships from 27 African countries in last year's selection. African institutions are increasingly involved in teaching the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master programmes, with 46 institutions from the continent collaborating in running the 44 programmes selected this year. They range from specialised universities to research institutes active in areas such as infectious diseases, biodiversity and ecosystems, or harnessing the power of cloud computing to benefit the environment.

35 projects promoting capacity building in higher education that are designed to improve the quality and innovation of programmes in African universities have been chosen for support. This year's selection covers a wider range of countries than ever before, with Madagascar, the Comoros, Mauritania and Guinea participating in addition to the more traditional partners, which is a sign that Erasmus+ is successfully reaching out to new institutions on the continent.

Moreover, 39 small-scale projects have been selected for funding that help build capacity in the youth sector with African partners. These projects, involving youth organisations and the non-profit sector (NGOs and social businesses for example), promote informal learning and help young people start their own businesses and play an active part in their local communities.

Background

Investing in inclusive and equitable quality education for all is a key priority for the EU, in line with the [United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals](#). Education at all levels and investment in young people are vital for improvements in skills and employment, for sustainable growth, and for active citizenship.

Investing in people by investing in education and skills is one of the cornerstones of the [Africa-Europe Alliance](#), which aims to take the EU's partnership with Africa to the next level. To do so, the Commission proposes to boost investment, to further attract private investors, to support education and skills development for employability, as well as to boost trade and improve the business climate.

Besides setting up new areas and new channels for cooperation, the Africa-Europe Alliance also seeks to leverage the potential of the EU's existing programmes for international cooperation. Channelling additional funding into Erasmus+ is boosting participation by African people and organisations with the objective of supporting the mobility of 35,000 students and researchers from the African continent by 2020, leading to a total number of 105,000 by 2027.

Erasmus+ is the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport for the period 2014-2020. Erasmus+ funds academic and youth mobility and cooperation between Europe and other regions in the world, including Africa, where it supports activities that are closely matched with the EU's policy cooperation priorities for the continent. African countries have been able to take part in Erasmus+ as partner countries since 2014.

For more information

[Factsheet](#)

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Vaccination: European Commission and World Health Organization join forces to promote the benefits of vaccines



Today, the European Commission and the World Health Organization (WHO) are co-hosting the world's first [Global Vaccination Summit](#) in Brussels. The aim is to accelerate global action to stop the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases, and advocate against the spread of vaccine misinformation worldwide.

Jean-Claude **Juncker**, President of the European Commission, said: *"It is inexcusable that in a world as developed as ours, there are still children dying of diseases that should have been eradicated long ago. Worse, we have the solution in our hands but it is not being put to full use. Vaccination already prevents 2-3 million deaths a year and could prevent a further 1.5 million if global vaccination coverage improved. Today's summit is an opportunity to address this gap. The Commission will continue to work with the EU's Member States in their national efforts and with our partners here today. This is a global challenge we must tackle together, and now."*

Dr **Tedros** Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, said: *"After many years of progress, we are at a critical turning point. Measles is resurging, and 1 in 10 children continues to miss out on essential childhood vaccines. We can and must get back on track. We will only do this by ensuring everyone can benefit from the power of vaccines – and if governments and partners invest in immunization as a right for all, and a social good. Now is the time to step up efforts to support vaccination as a core part of health for all."*

Opening the summit, President Juncker and Dr Tedros called for an urgent intensification of efforts to stop the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles. In the past 3 years, 7 countries, including 4 in the European region, have lost their measles elimination status. New outbreaks are the direct result of gaps in vaccination coverage, including amongst teenagers and adults who were never fully vaccinated. To tackle vaccination gaps effectively, the summit addressed the multiple barriers to vaccination, including rights, regulations and accessibility, availability, quality and convenience of vaccination services; social and cultural norms, values and support; individual motivation, attitudes, and knowledge and skills.

The European Commission and the World Health Organization also urged for

strong support of [GAVI, the Global Vaccine Alliance](#). GAVI plays a critical role in achieving the global vaccine goals in the world's least-resourced countries.

New models and opportunities for stepping up vaccine development are also on the Global Vaccination Summit agenda, as well as ways to ensure that immunisation is a public health priority and a universal right.

Background

The [WHO](#) has declared vaccine hesitancy, including complacency and lack of confidence and convenience, one of ten threats to global health in 2019. Vaccines are safe and effective, and are the foundation of any strong Primary Health Care system.

Worldwide, 79% of people agree that vaccines are safe and 84% agree that they are effective, according to the [Wellcome Global Monitor](#) on how people around the world think and feel about science and major health challenges. Yet, the [State of Vaccine Confidence in the EU](#) report shows that vaccine refusal has been increasing in many EU member states linked to low confidence in the safety and effectiveness of vaccines worldwide. This lack of confidence contributes significantly to lower coverage rates, which are essential to ensure herd immunity and are leading to increases in disease outbreak.

According to a [Eurobarometer](#) from April this year, almost half of the EU public (48%) believes that vaccines can often produce serious side effects, 38% think they can cause the diseases against which they protect and 31% are convinced that they can weaken the immune system. These figures are also the result of an increased spread of disinformation about the benefits and risks of vaccines through digital and social media.

So far in 2019, reported measles cases have reached the highest numbers seen globally since 2006. A surge in measles cases that began in 2018 has continued into 2019, with approximately 90 000 cases reported for the first half of the year in the WHO European Region alone and over 365 000 worldwide. These half-year figures already exceed each annual total since 2006.

Progress towards Universal Health Coverage and ultimately Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals – Ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all at all ages –are priorities in Europe and around the world. WHO, its Member States, and the European Union have taken bold steps to address the immunization gaps that offer an open door to any vaccine-preventable disease. The activities set in motion by the WHO European Vaccine Action Plan, the Council Recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine-preventable diseases, and the European Union's Joint Action on Vaccination have far-reaching consequences for health systems and communities.

For More Information

[Questions & Answers](#)

[Ten actions towards vaccination for all](#)

[Global Vaccination Summit](#)

[Vaccination website](#)

[Special Eurobarometer 488: Europeans' attitudes towards vaccination](#)

[Council Recommendation on strengthened cooperation against vaccine-preventable diseases](#)

WHO:

[Immunization coverage fact sheet](#)

[WHO vaccine policy recommendations](#)

[EU financial regulators highlight risks of a no-deal Brexit and search for yield](#)

The 2019 Autumn ESAs' report highlights the following risks as potential sources of instability:

- Uncertainties around the terms of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union
- Persistently low interest rates, which combined with flattening yield curves, put pressure on the profitability and returns of financial institutions, incentivise search-for-yield strategies and increase valuation risks
- Transition to a more sustainable economy and environmental, social and governance (ESG) related risks, leading to possible challenges to the viability of business models with high exposures to climate sensitive sectors.

In light of the ongoing uncertainties, especially those around Brexit, supervisory vigilance and cooperation across all sectors remains key. Therefore, the ESAs call for the following policy actions by European and national competent authorities (NCAs) as well as financial institutions:

- **Contingency planning:** Financial institutions and supervisors should continue their work on contingency planning and assurance of business continuity in the case of a no-deal Brexit. Considering the variety of measures undertaken by the ESAs and national supervisory authorities and other competent authorities, the EU financial sector should be well informed and prepared to manage risks from a micro-perspective. The ESA's will also continue to closely monitor ongoing political and market developments and consider the need for further communications on that basis.

- **“Low-for-long” scenario:** Supervisors and financial institutions should continue taking into account a “low-for-long” interest rate scenario and associated risks. Low interest rates are an important driver of low bank profitability and remain the main risk for the insurance and pension fund sectors. They contribute to the further build-up of valuation risks in securities markets as well as to a move into less liquid and more leveraged investments through search-for-yield strategies. On the investment fund side, a convergent application of the rules on liquidity management and (for UCITS) eligible assets as well as a consistent use of stress testing will be important supervisory tools.
- **Bank profitability:** There is a need to further address unprofitable banks and their business models in order to increase the resilience of institutions to a more challenging economic environment. Further investments into financial technologies and exploring opportunities for bank sector consolidation are among responses to low profitability. Transparency and the consistent application of common prudential requirements and supervisory rules across jurisdictions are preconditions, which could contribute to the use of opportunities cross border consolidation, may offer.
- **Leveraged lending market:** Risks related to the leveraged loan market and Collateralized Loan Obligations (CLOs) in the financial sector should be further explored and identified. There is a lack of clarity about the total volume of leveraged loans outstanding and about the ultimate holders of risks of many CLO tranches. Supervisors have raised concerns about a possible underpricing of risks.
- **Sustainable finance and ESG risks:** Supervisory authorities and financial institutions should continue their work on identifying exposures to climate related risks and facilitate access of investors to sustainable assets. Scenario analysis and stress testing are important tools that can be implemented by supervisors with a goal to incorporate sustainability considerations into risk assessment. Financial institutions should incorporate climate risk and other ESG factors into their risk management framework and should play a stewardship role by taking into account the impact of their activities on ESG factors. Going forward, the ESAs should take a proactive stance in fulfilling mandates on sustainable finance, including on how ESG considerations can be incorporated into the regulatory and supervisory framework of EU financial institutions.

Background

The Joint Committee is the forum for cooperation between the European Banking Authority (EBA), European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) and European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA), collectively known as the European Supervisory Authorities (ESAs).

Through the Joint Committee, the three ESAs cooperate regularly and closely to ensure consistency in their practices. In particular, the Joint Committee works in the areas of supervision of financial conglomerates, accounting and auditing, micro-prudential analyses of cross-sectoral developments, risks and vulnerabilities for financial stability, retail investment products and

measures combating money laundering. In addition, the Joint Committee also plays an important role in the exchange of information with the European Systemic Risk Board (ESRB).